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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2015

(3-5 February 2015)*

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. The Executive Board elected as President Masood Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, and as Vice-Presidents Mwaba Patricia Kasese-Bota, Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations, Laura Elena Flores Herrera, Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations, Heiko Thoms, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, and Kristel Lõuk, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations.

B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director

2. The President of the Executive Board said that this was a time of both great promise and serious peril for the world's children. Children around the world were under greater threat than ever before from humanitarian emergencies, sectarian strife and crises, such as the outbreak of the Ebola virus, which had devastated families and communities in West Africa. In the last few months, the world had been devastated by increasingly brutal attacks by extremist groups against children. On 16 December 2014, terrorists had killed 134 children in a school in Peshawar, Pakistan. The attack had traumatized his nation and the entire world and galvanized them to take actions to save children from such savagery and brutality.

3. The Executive Board observed a moment of silence in honour of all children who were victims of violence.

4. The President recognized the heroic work of UNICEF staff all over the world. He said that the UNICEF equity agenda helped to shine a light on the poorest of the poor and the marginalized, many of them women and children. Together with Guatemala and Luxembourg, Pakistan was Co-Chair of an informal group of 30 Member States that made up The Group of Friends for Children and the Sustainable Development Goals. The group would work through the two intergovernmental processes for the post-2015 development agenda and financing for development to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

5. He noted that the UNICEF Executive Board is unique in the United Nations system because political differences are put aside by the Board so that work can focus on achieving consensus in the best interests of the child.

6. The Executive Director acknowledged the recent death of a steadfast friend of UNICEF, Mårten Grunditz, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. The Executive Board observed a moment of silence in honour of Ambassador Grunditz.

7. The Executive Director then spoke of an issue with profound implications not only for UNICEF, but also for the entire world: the information technology revolution. He stated that information technology was exciting but also frightening, because it could be used to bully children through social media, recruit them online into extremist groups, exploit them sexually or even to increase inequities between children who have a connection to the Internet and those who do not. At the same

time, technology has promised to create new opportunities to make the world a better place for children.

8. Today, mobile phones and rapid messaging technology are being used to reunite families in South Sudan, speed up HIV test results in Malawi and Zambia and register children's births in Nigeria. Technology has also helped the most disadvantaged make their needs known. U-Report, for example, uses short message service (SMS) technology to bring communities in direct contact with their Governments and UNICEF. There are now "U-reporters" in 11 countries, accounting for more than 3 million messages exchanged per month.

9. Technology has also strengthened the ability of UNICEF to keep children's rights at the centre of global discussions. More than 2.5 million people visit the UNICEF web site, using mobile phones every year. About 1.2 million people follow UNICEF on Twitter and 3 million people are reached each week on Facebook. More than one third of this audience is aged 25 years or younger.

10. Technology has fundamentally transformed the ways in which ideas, influence and information are shared and used, allowing communities, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations, businesses and ordinary citizens to amplify their own voices.

11. Two years ago, UNICEF had conducted an examination of trends over the next decade, called UNICEF 3.0, which focused on partnerships — with donors, NGOs, communities and others. Traditionally, such partnerships had been based largely on contractual arrangements in which one party supplied resources, another arranged for goods and services to be delivered and yet another delivered them. Such transactional relationships did not always allow room for thinking through problems together and for finding new and more efficient ways to assist those in need.

12. UNICEF 3.0 challenged the organization to find new ways to work together to improve the lives of children everywhere, moving from formal partnerships to structured networks and alliances, informal partnerships, campaigns and movements that were more organic and horizontal. Of course, UNICEF activities had always revolved around partnerships, primarily with Governments, which would continue to drive its work. This, however, did not mean that partnerships were frozen in time. At this session, the Executive Board would discuss ways to maintain a UNICEF presence in high- and middle-income countries. This was an important opportunity, not only to continue the effective partnerships UNICEF had built with countries over the decades, but also to collaborate to find new ways of reaching the children being left behind in every society, including developed countries.

13. The focus of UNICEF partnerships with donors was moving beyond resources alone. Both sides were increasingly working through challenges together, using their expertise and experiences to develop solutions that worked. Partnerships with the private sector were breaking the confines of traditional donor-recipient cooperation, as the Supply Division was now working with companies to reduce the costs of essential commodities, such as vaccines, and to improve the specifications for products, ranging from toilets to water purification devices.

14. UNICEF must also look for new opportunities to work through structured networks and Global Programme Partnerships such as the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Through this public-private partnership comprising over 200 countries and 20 million volunteers, more than 2.5 billion children had been immunized. The

Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI Alliance) was achieving similar results, lowering the costs of life-saving vaccines and helping the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and their partners to vaccinate half a billion children over the past 15 years, all by bringing together businesses, investors, Governments, United Nations agencies and other partners, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

15. Not all partnerships needed to be formal networks or alliances. The battle against Ebola was showing how a variety of partners could come together in different ways. Informal partnerships often came alive through South-South and triangular cooperation, as countries shared ideas and best practices with one another. Campaigns were another way to bring partners together in action for children. The No Lost Generation, End Violence and Imagine campaigns had reached millions of people and raised awareness about the rights of children. Social movements could also be a powerful pillar of support for development efforts of Governments. The initial success of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement was due not only to Government commitment and resources, but also to the commitment and action of networks of activists and experts from around the world.

16. In a horizontal world, UNICEF and the United Nations could not simply proclaim leadership and impose sustainable development goals. Meeting these goals should be an opportunity to build or strengthen broad-based movements for saving the environment, ending extreme poverty and promoting women's rights and child survival, health, education, nutrition and protection.

17. UNICEF had worked closely with five leading NGOs — ChildFund Alliance, Plan, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision — to put children at the heart of the new development agenda. UNICEF was supporting action 2015, a diverse and growing movement of more than 1,200 organizations, coalitions and partnerships in over 125 countries. UNICEF was working to embrace the new horizontal world in its complexity and use these changes to fuel new partnerships, collaborative efforts, ideas, solutions and movements that would improve children's lives, safeguard their futures and build a better world.

C. Adoption of the agenda

18. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2015/1) for the session.

19. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 39 observer delegations, including 2 intergovernmental organizations, 10 National Committees for UNICEF and 2 NGOs.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings

20. Following introductory remarks by the Director, Programme Division, the Associate Director for HIV/AIDS, Programme Division, presented the report.

21. Delegations commended UNICEF for its work, as part of the United Nations coordinated response to HIV, to empower young people to protect themselves against HIV, to enhance social protection for people affected by HIV and to prevent mothers from dying and babies from becoming infected with HIV.

22. UNICEF and its partners were commended on achievements in the treatment of children, but more work was still needed. Innovative methods were required to increase access to antiretroviral treatments for pregnant women and children, including further improvements to diagnostics and treatments for paediatric HIV, to stimulate lower costs and appropriate formulations.

23. Delegations expressed support for the leadership of UNICEF in ramping up programmes to address the HIV epidemic among adolescents, particularly young women, and through All In, the multi-partner initiative to close the gap in treatment and prevention among adolescents. They stressed that youth-friendly services that linked sexual and reproductive health with HIV were critical. Comprehensive sexuality education in and outside schools was necessary to ensure that young people had adequate knowledge about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. This was important in the light of complex social problems such as gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination. The rights and empowerment of adolescents should be at the centre of those efforts.

24. Speakers urged UNICEF to work with partners to better understand the impact of social protection programming and improve the evidence base for these interventions. This would be especially relevant for the post-2015 development agenda.

25. Speakers expressed appreciation for the alignment between UNICEF HIV programmes, the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Unified Budget Results and Accountability Framework. They encouraged UNICEF to utilize its ongoing experiences to help improve the UNAIDS strategic focus, country-level coordination and leadership. UNICEF was also asked about the implications of the upcoming revision of the UNAIDS strategy and the fast-track strategy for its HIV work and focus up to 2015 and beyond.

26. A speaker described her Government's national strategic plan for HIV 2013-2020 and the national HIV support programme aimed at vulnerable children, which is carried out in collaboration with UNICEF and other stakeholders.

B. UNICEF programme cooperation

1. Country programme documents

27. The Vice-President of the Executive Board (Zambia) informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with its decision 2014/1, country programme documents would be considered and approved at the present session on a no-objection basis. Drafts of the country programme documents for Madagascar (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.1) and Mali (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.2) had been posted on the Executive Board website (http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard) during the period from 10 to 28 November 2014 to give members of the Executive Board an opportunity to comment on them. The comments received had been shared with the respective regional and country offices and Governments and taken into account, as appropriate, in the final versions of the documents now before the Executive Board. A costed evaluation plan for each country programme had been posted on the Executive Board website, as had the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrices. Further discussion was to be held only if at least five members of the Executive Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme document before the Executive Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests.

28. The Director, Programme Division, made some general comments about the two country programme documents.

29. The Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa, presented the country programme document for Madagascar. She thanked the Executive Board members and delegations who provided extensive comments in the lead-up to finalizing the country programme document (comments were posted from Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America). These comments helped to crystallize the components of the country programme document and intensify its focus.

30. The representative of Madagascar said that the country programme document had been prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy and Planning, in an inclusive process that had involved the participation of, and consultation with, all stakeholders, including through sectoral consultations with the UNICEF country office and the Regional Office. The proposed programme responded to national priorities and, as part of the process, would contribute to achieving the targets contained in the country's national development plan and further enable key sectors, including the private sector and civil society. The year 2015 marked 30 years of UNICEF operations in Madagascar. The Government hoped that as the country emerged from five years of social and political crises, cooperation with all partners, particularly UNICEF, would continue to ensure that no generation of children was left behind.

31. The Vice-President commented that the country programme document demonstrated a commendable spirit of solidarity and partnership with the plans and priorities of the host country.

32. After providing a brief summary of recent UNICEF efforts to combat the Ebola virus outbreak and respond to the ongoing level 3 emergency in the Central African Republic and other crises, the Regional Director, West and Central Africa, introduced the country programme document for Mali. He noted that the programme

of cooperation had benefited from the comments of several delegations, in particular Belgium, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, Sweden and the United States.

33. The representative of Mali said that the serious security crisis that had occurred in 2012 in the northern part of the country had dealt a harsh blow to the Government efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals regarding children, who were the major casualties of the crisis. With the support of the international community, Mali was focusing on returning children to school, on the socioeconomic reintegration of those affected by the crisis and on the promotion and protection of the rights of that fragile segment of society. The proposed country programme would undoubtedly lead to improved basic social services, social cohesion, economic recovery and the return of public administration in the northern regions of the country.

34. The Vice-President added that the UNICEF programme complemented the work of the Government in providing fundamental and key interventional services for children.

35. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/1 (see annex).

2. Extensions of ongoing country programmes

36. The Vice-President said that, in accordance with its decision 2009/11, the Executive Board was informed of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and the six-month extension of the country programme for Ethiopia. The Executive Board was requested to approve the two-year extensions of the country programmes for Myanmar and Papua New Guinea. These proposals were presented in document E/ICEF/2015/P/L.3.

37. The representative of Papua New Guinea thanked UNICEF for aligning the country programme with the country's medium-term development plan for 2011-2015, which had been extended to 2017. That would ensure better coordination with the national planning cycle and allow particular focus on accelerating immunization; early childhood care and development; education for girls; ending violence against children; and strengthening access to justice for children.

38. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/2 (see annex).

C. UNICEF work with countries transitioning from middle- to high-income status

39. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, External Relations, the report (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.6) was presented by the Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy.

40. Several delegations expressed support for UNICEF continuing to work in countries making the transition, particularly in the context of the organization's universal mandate. One speaker said that because of the UNICEF child rights mandate, it was an existential discussion about the core values of the organization. Within the current shifting dynamics of the world today, including the discussions on the sustainable development goals and financing for development, the debate

provided an important precedent for a larger discussion within the wider United Nations system.

41. At the same time, however, speakers stressed the vital importance of ensuring that the primary focus of UNICEF continue to be on children in least development countries and sub-Saharan Africa. A group of delegations reiterated the recommendation of the previous President of the Executive Board that UNICEF develop a clear and comprehensive strategic action plan for Africa's children. UNICEF should not only increase by a significant percentage the allocation of regular resources to Africa, but also work with donors and partners to allocate more non-core resources to country programmes in Africa.

42. Two delegations, welcoming the proposed new policy, discussed the role of UNICEF in their countries as they made the transition from middle- to high-income status. In one case, the Executive Board had approved the transformation of a country programme from a traditional programme into one that generated resources from the private sector within the country, a mandate supported by an additional government contribution in the form of office facilities. UNICEF gradually had transformed its development assistance role to a true partnership that was engaging citizens, experts, the media, the private sector and Government authorities. The country now contributed to global regular resources and was recognized as a model for advancing children's rights and for a sharing good practices in its region. The second country had made the transition from recipient to donor country, establishing a National Committee that was a major contributor to UNICEF, and offered its experience as a model for other countries.

43. Other speakers encouraged UNICEF to challenge the paradigm of donor and recipient countries and continue to pursue South-South and trilateral cooperation.

44. A delegation suggested that the issue of working with countries transitioning from middle- to high-income status would best be addressed through a strategic inter-agency plan to be considered by the General Assembly. A second speaker cautioned against using concepts that had not been agreed by Member States until a satisfactory and common understanding had been decided by the Economic and Social Council and the upcoming third International Conference on Financing for Development. The draft decision presented in the report would have a systemic impact on the financing model of other funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and a piecemeal approach to reform should be avoided.

45. Other delegations stated that the Executive Board was the best platform for developing mechanisms to challenge the status quo. It was important that in 2015 the Board commit to consider changing the way UNICEF worked, because business as usual was not an option. UNICEF was the agency that could implement the innovations within its organizational structure needed to support countries going through this transition, including through ensuring its ongoing physical presence in relevant countries.

46. Several speakers stressed that gross national income or gross domestic product should not be the main indicators for determining a country's status, as they often masked national inequities that affected children in middle- and even high-income countries. Middle-income countries were diverse and some were extremely vulnerable to external factors. There was no "one size fits all" model, and it was critical that country programmes take into account the particular needs and

requirements of individual countries. UNICEF should define measurements and indicators that provided a more focused view of the internal situation in each country so as to target resources more effectively.

47. In terms of the specific proposals in the report, a delegation said that countries might encounter legal impediments that would prevent them from using public resources to contribute to UNICEF. The condition that countries match UNICEF regular resources could be a disincentive because failure to mobilize funds from the private sector would mean that Governments would have to make up that deficit using public resources.

48. Another delegation said that the proposal did not take sufficiently into account in-kind contributions such as premises for country offices, and financial contributions such as overhead paid by Governments for cost-sharing for projects. It would be counterproductive to endorse any shift from a voluntary to a mandatory approach for financing by high-income programme countries. The very idea of turning new high-income countries that are still developing into net contributors to regular resources also deserved more debate because it could aggravate, rather than address, the current imbalance between regular and other resources from traditional donors. Requiring high-income developing countries to contribute to core resources while others continued to earmark their contributions was neither reasonable nor sustainable.

49. Other delegations saw as key the proposal that high-income countries match 100 per cent of the amount UNICEF invested in the respective countries as a contribution to regular resources. They asked about the rationale behind high-income countries only contributing to management of related cost after five years, and whether it would be possible to ask them to contribute sooner; if UNICEF had a plan for countries not living up to the requirements proposed in the decision; and if the proposal included the principle that all fundraising units must follow the same rules and regulations.

50. Several delegations suggested that going forward, UNICEF provide information about its experiences in high-income countries, including the effects on human and administrative resources, and that the issue be included in a comprehensive assessment connected to the midterm review of the Strategic Plan in 2016 and the related review of the allocation of country programming resources. The review of UNICEF activity in high-income countries should include experience in mobilizing civil society for fundraising and child rights advocacy, and the opportunities and constraints for the establishment of a National Committee.

51. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/3 (see annex).

D. Update on UNICEF humanitarian action and proposal for an increase in the ceiling of the Emergency Programme Fund

52. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the update on strengthening humanitarian action and the proposal (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.4).

1. Update on strengthening humanitarian action

53. Delegations applauded the UNICEF staff working in extremely challenging circumstances, often at great personal risk. They underscored the important role of UNICEF in protecting children and their families when natural disasters occurred and during violent conflict. The organization's Ebola response was a good example of its role in responding to humanitarian crises.

54. Speakers said that UNICEF held a unique position in breaching the divide between humanitarian action and development efforts and contributing to the implementation of the resilience agenda. They commended the initiatives taken to integrate and link humanitarian and development programmes. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to develop joint approaches across its humanitarian development programmes to support timely and coherent transitions from relief to development.

55. Delegations welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to strengthen its organizational capability to respond effectively to humanitarian crises, including staffing, more targeted strategic partnerships, increased surge capacity and improved monitoring and evaluation systems. They expressed support for the Executive Director's actions to ensure that essential personnel were in the right place with the right skills at the right time, including through the expansion of the Emergency Response Team.

56. UNICEF was encouraged to continue to work with host Governments before, during and after emergencies to ensure effective responses that supported existing capacities. It was suggested that UNICEF country programmes in crisis-prone contexts always include updated emergency preparedness and response plans. Delegations welcomed UNICEF efforts to better adapt humanitarian action to emerging operational contexts and to implement risk-informed programming at the country level.

57. It was suggested that UNICEF should use its knowledge and expertise to contribute to innovations within the humanitarian system as a whole, in order to support joint system-wide improvements. The humanitarian system could benefit from innovations and partnerships with the private sector.

58. Delegations expressed support for UNICEF work in responding to sexual and gender-based violence and for its role as subcluster co-lead with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in this area within the global protection cluster. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to work with its partners to integrate prevention, response and sexual and reproductive health into comprehensive responses to sexual and gender-based violence.

59. It was noted that for 2014, UNICEF has reported good results for nutrition and health, and weaker results on protection and education. UNICEF was urged to strengthen education in humanitarian crisis, promote child protection and prioritize education in emergencies. Speakers stressed the paramount importance of including education in the initial humanitarian response because education could be life-saving through the access it gave to information, protection, health care and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Education was too often far down the list of priorities in humanitarian crises, and needed to be prioritized in early recovery and long-term development aid. Speakers cited the leadership of UNICEF, particularly the Executive Director, in the No Lost Generation strategy, which was a good example of addressing the harmful disruption to children's education in

emergencies. One noted the importance of reintegrating children affected by conflict into their communities. They also noted that in the recent emergency in the Philippines, UNICEF and the global education cluster efforts in education had served almost 1 million children, and the education sector work was highly rated in the programme evaluation. This was cited as a great achievement.

60. Delegations commended UNICEF for continuing to strengthen and build innovation into its humanitarian action. Innovation was a key to unlocking new ways of solving humanitarian problems, such as building on cash trends for technologies and developing a greater role for the private sector. Speakers also commended UNICEF for its leadership in preparations for the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit.

61. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to thoroughly implement recommendations from evaluations of humanitarian programmes and to strengthen both its role as cluster lead globally and in humanitarian contexts and its cooperation with partners, especially NGOs. They encouraged UNICEF to take into consideration the outcomes of the current independent review of the global protection cluster.

2. Strengthening predictability of the UNICEF response to humanitarian crises: Proposal to increase the Emergency Programme Fund ceiling

62. Delegations voiced widespread support for the proposal to double the ceiling of the Emergency Programme Fund from $75 million per biennium to $75 million per year. However, the increase should not have a negative impact on the ability of UNICEF to attract voluntary contributions, and UNICEF should ensure alignment of the Fund with other international financing mechanisms, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund. At the same time, UNICEF should work proactively to find long-term solutions to supporting humanitarian activities through innovative approaches to securing emergency funding.

63. A speaker said that the Central Emergency Response Fund could be more successful if its resources were channelled more rapidly to implementing agencies, and called upon UNICEF and all other agencies to ensure more timely distributions to NGOs. A delegation encouraged all humanitarian organizations to continue to make good use of the Central Emergency Response Fund and disburse funding in a timely fashion. It was also crucial that, once disbursed by the Central Emergency Response Fund, the funds be used rapidly in the field. It was suggested that all agencies benefiting from the Fund improve its outreach by better presenting its achievements.

64. One delegation suggested that, given the good results shown by UNICEF and the high level of utilization of the Emergency Programme Fund during 2014, the possibility of further increasing the ceiling could be investigated, with the issue reassessed in one year.

65. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/4 (see annex).

E. Extension and expansion of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and its revolving fund

66. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the report (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.5) was presented by the Director, Supply Division.

67. In general statements made at the opening of the annual session, many delegations expressed support for the extension and expansion of the initiative and its revolving fund. One delegation asked if freight costs were included in the payments from the revolving fund or if the requesting country would be responsible for those charges. The Director replied that the disbursements covered the cost of freight, which was thus part of what was replenished and paid at the end of the process rather than at the beginning.

68. Another speaker asked about the donors to the revolving fund, how the fund was replenished and if the mechanism helped to lower the prices and increase the quality of the goods purchased. The Director replied that there had been original donors to the capital fund, but because it was a revolving fund it replenished itself and the capital remained intact. The aim of increasing the fund was to meet more financing needs for countries. As for quality and price, vaccines purchased by UNICEF were prequalified by WHO. UNICEF also worked with national Governments to ensure that the products they imported were licensed, and facilitated the exchange of relevant documentation with the national regulatory authorities. UNICEF had a number of ways to achieve the lowest prices, including pooling quantities of vaccines, to give greater leverage in negotiations with industry, and multi-year tenders, to reduce the risk to manufacturers of having to guess the quantities UNICEF and Governments would buy each year.

69. To a question raised by the Vice-President about the cost of vaccine shipments to landlocked countries, the Director replied that medicines were predominantly shipped by sea but vaccines were almost exclusively shipped by airfreight because the cold chain had to be maintained from the point of manufacture through to the end users. UNICEF employed temperature monitoring devices that recorded the temperature of the vaccines throughout the shipment until they reached the consignee, who inspected and confirmed the good condition of the vaccines. A vaccine vial monitor on every vial of vaccine purchased by UNICEF detected any changes in temperature. In terms of moving vaccines more efficiently in landlocked countries, UNICEF worked continuously to improve supply chains.

70. Asked about the other commodities to be acquired through the expanded initiative, the Director said that the majority of requests made were for immunization supplies, but because of the effectiveness of the initiative for financing vaccine purchases, national Governments saw its potential for purchasing other products as well. These were predominantly health and nutrition products, particularly ready-to-use therapeutic food and essential medicines, and supplies for the Ebola response and for water, sanitation and hygience. The Supply Division was tracking and monitoring the requests and could report back at a later date.

71. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/5 (see annex).

F. Evaluation reports and management responses

1. Real-time evaluation of the UNICEF response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines

72. The report, which had been made available on the UNICEF website, was presented by the Director, Evaluation. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the management response was presented by the Regional Director, East Asia and the Pacific.

73. The representative of the Philippines expressed his country's profound appreciation for the tremendous assistance extended by UNICEF in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. UNICEF had mobilized the highest level of response possible. Its appeal for $120 million had been fully funded, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of national, institutional, international and individual donors. UNICEF had been able to deploy emergency teams and supplies to support the essential protection, health, nutrition, education and water and sanitation needs of the effected families and children. A year later, UNICEF continued to assist the rebuilding efforts in the affected communities. The continuing UNICEF response was sustained and comprehensive in scope and the Government was in overall agreement with the evaluation.

74. A group of delegations stressed the importance of an independent evaluation function within UNICEF and encouraged the organization to allocate sufficient resources for this work and to follow up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

75. They commended UNICEF for carrying out this real-time evaluation, for reviewing the recommendations and for making detailed plans for follow-up. There were many positive findings in the report. Work in health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene and cash transfers had received high marks, while work in nutrition and protection had received lower ones. The fundraising work carried out through the National Committees for UNICEF had been truly outstanding. The evaluation highlighted many of the relevant challenges. The management response showed that UNICEF was already incorporating recommendations and lessons learned in its emergency work.

76. The primary lesson learned from this evaluation was the importance of emergency preparedness and response plans, and delegations encouraged UNICEF to consider integrating a minimum level of such plans into all country programmes in crisis-prone contexts, in an initiative led from headquarters.

77. The delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue the analysis of how available funds were spent. Although efficiency considerations were difficult to assess in a real-time evaluation, they were are at the heart of evaluations and must be addressed.

2. Evaluation of UNICEF upstream work in basic education and gender equality 2003-2012

78. The Director, Evaluation, introduced the report, which had been made available on the UNICEF website. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the evaluation was presented by the Director, Programme Division.

79. A group of delegations said that the evaluation was comprehensive, detailed and analytical, providing a good overview of the direction in which UNICEF was moving. The evaluation showed the importance of long-term engagement. It also demonstrated the importance of having skilled and credible staff who could build confidence and trust among Government representatives, donors and relevant stakeholders, and secure long-term financing.

80. Delegations requested more information on how the results of upstream work would be documented, including issues related to sustainability, attribution and aggregated results. Because actual policy change often required multi-year interventions, they encouraged UNICEF to prioritize reporting on intermediate changes, as well as on actual change and impact results; and to report on the strategies used and results achieved in different contexts.

81. It appeared that UNICEF was still struggling to find its role within emergency and conflict- sensitive contexts related to upstream work, although the Zimbabwe case study provided a good example of how UNICEF could use an upstream focus to support the transition out of emergency mode in the context of a humanitarian emergency.

82. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to align its work more closely with the AIDS agenda and supported the recommendation on the need to strengthen the capacity of the education team for upstream work. They asked how UNICEF was ensuring exchange of knowledge and experience among the global, regional and national levels. Given a lack of relevant and useful analysis on how gender had been included in upstream work, they asked UNICEF to assess whether an additional evaluation was required, focusing specifically on gender and gender equality in upstream work. They further urged UNICEF to integrate gender and gender equality aspects into all evaluations.

83. Delegations noted that the evaluation also stated that UNICEF work on capacity-building focused too much on individuals, rather than institutions. They requested UNICEF to seek stronger collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other relevant organizations, especially at the country level, using the "Delivering as one" concept.

G. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013 and report of the Board of Auditors

84. The Executive Board had before it the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013 and report of the Board of Auditors (A/69/5/Add.3); the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports on the United Nations funds and programmes for the financial period ended 31 December 2013 (A/69/353/Add.1); and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/69/386).

85. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the reports were presented by the Deputy Director for Accounts in the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, the Acting Comptroller.

86. Delegations welcomed the fact that the Board of Auditors had once again issued an unqualified audit report on the financial statements for the period under

review and complimented UNICEF on the progress made on the recommendations of the previous report. A group of countries requested a copy of the management actions and clear plans that were in place for addressing the issues raised by the Board of Auditors, possibly with deadlines and milestones.

87. Delegations also welcomed the significant progress UNICEF had made in the last year on the general oversight of National Committees and encouraged further progress in this regard. While the overall National Committee retention rate had dropped from 28 per cent in 2012 to 24 per cent in 2013, there was still room for further improvement in the retention rates and reserve policies of the Committees. UNICEF was urged to follow up on this matter.

88. A group of delegations noted with concern the observations of the Board of Auditors about serious deficiencies in the systems and routines for selecting, monitoring and evaluating implementing partners. Speakers said that, according to the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, 32 per cent of overall expenditure was incurred through implementing partners. This high percentage underlined the need for sufficient assessment of the partners' capacity prior to a cash transfer and for efficient systems for monitoring of partners. They asked how UNICEF would improve the selection, monitoring and evaluation of its implementing partners. Maintaining strong procedures in these areas would help to build the financial-management capacities of implementing partners, which were crucial for the implementation of UNICEF country programmes.

89. Delegations encouraged UNICEF and its United Nations partners to address these issues at the inter-agency level, especially because they had already been raised by the UNICEF internal auditors in 2012 and by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit in 2013 and had been highlighted as weaknesses within the United Nations Development Programme and UNFPA.

90. It was noted that the report of the Advisory Committee also pointed out the importance of information-sharing regarding with other United Nations entities as part of improved control and risk management regarding implementing partners. Although the harmonized approach to cash transfers was a good tool in this regard, external and internal audit reports had shown that adherence to the harmonized approach to cash transfers varied among country offices. Because the harmonized approach to cash transfers had been revised in 2014, it now provided an even better framework for UNICEF collaboration with implementing partners. Delegations urged UNICEF to provide necessary support and resources to country offices for the effective implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers.

91. Delegations welcomed the unqualified audit opinion for 2013 that each agency had received during the second year of implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, which clearly were bringing positive changes. These included better transparency, monthly reviews of financial information and the streamlining of processes to reduce manual inputs. Speakers encouraged UNICEF to continue its efforts in these areas.

92. Speakers also welcomed the progress made in addressing the significant employee benefit liabilities and encouraged UNICEF to share these positive experiences with donors and other United Nations agencies facing these challenges. In line with the recommendation of the Board of Auditors related to UNICEF cost management, they supported the recommendation to continue the analysis of the

cost of country offices' private sector fundraising activities. Such an analysis could provide information about best practices for raising funds and inform strategic discussions on the best use of resources.

93. A group of delegations expressed support for the recommendation of the Board of Auditors to establish baselines and targets for all indicators in the Strategic Plan. This was crucial for measuring results and programme effectiveness in relation to the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the Strategic Plan. The delegations looked forward to the establishment of a mechanism to link the resources and indicators of the Strategic Plan to those at the country level to support global reporting of resource-related achievements.

94. A delegation asked how consolidated accounts were evaluated by each agency in countries where there was one United Nations country office. The Deputy Director replied that to her knowledge, in countries where the United Nations was working as one, the agencies still maintained separate accounts.

H. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2015 workplan and proposed budget

95. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, External Relations, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, presented the division's 2015 workplan and proposed budget (E/ICEF/2015/AB/L.1).

96. A group of delegations said that, in view of the economic situation in several countries where UNICEF had National Committees, it was right to expect moderate growth in 2015. They said they expected the proposed strategy of concentrating on expanding markets and on income streams with high cost-benefit potential to be highly efficient and trusted that it would determine how UNICEF investment capital would be used. They also expected the investment funds to be used to provide start-up financing for new income streams as pledged, and that they would generate new revenue for regular resources.

97. The delegations further said it remained uncertain to what extent the previously established pledge programmes would require further UNICEF investment or whether such programmes, once they received initial start-up financing, would be funded by the market.

98. The delegations requested more information on how the investment funds were allocated among National Committees and field offices and how much income they generated. The strategy to further strengthen fundraising by field offices was a correct approach. Financial contributions by individuals and the private sector in countries where UNICEF had field offices provided a great opportunity to achieve UNICEF income objectives and to broaden the UNICEF donor base. If these countries wanted to receive start-up financing, they had to abide by the same criteria used by the National Committees, including adherence to the contribution rate of 75 per cent and a retention rate of 25 per cent.

99. The delegations expressed their gratitude for the excellent work of the National Committees. This included both their important financial contribution and their advocacy for children's rights around the world and in their respective countries.

100. The representative of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF said that 2014 had been a year of unprecedented humanitarian crisis and violation of children's rights, especially in conflict situations. National Committees had responded with alacrity and flexibility by mobilizing more than 1 billion constituents, partners and volunteers, as well as Governments. They had raised substantial earmarked funds to support UNICEF on multiple fronts and continued to do so. The visible presence and impact of UNICEF in emergencies was an important demonstration to their constituents of the UNICEF mission of upholding and realizing the rights of children everywhere, particularly those in the most extreme circumstances.

101. The National Committees had embarked upon a challenging and ambitious four-year strategic plan, under which their contribution to private sector income would increase to $1.4 billion by 2017. The year 2014 had been a record year of achievement for National Committees. National Committees welcomed an expanded engagement with the private sector in a greater number of countries, with a view towards increasing contributions to regular resources.

102. The immediate focus for 2015 was to build on that result and secure the sustainable means to underpin continuing growth. That would be achieved primarily through the recruitment of monthly pledge donors, building on the Committees' base of over 4 million such donors, known as global parents. Funds from these donors go directly to regular resources.

103. Other key sources of income growth for National Committees were scalable partnerships with the corporate sector and foundations, deeper engagement with major donors and legacies.

104. The task of National Committees was greatly assisted through the provision of investment funds approved by the Executive Board, which were already showing good projected returns. A pattern of oversubscription for investment funds indicated further untapped potential.

105. In all these efforts National Committees could draw upon decades of experience in entrepreneurial fundraising partnerships and effective advocacy.

106. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/6 (see annex).

I. Pledging event

107. The Executive Director began the event by thanking partners who supported UNICEF. He said that a substantial, predictable and increasing flow of regular resources was central to the work of UNICEF, especially as it responded to a growing number of emergencies.

108. He noted that in 2000, approximately half of UNICEF revenue had been regular resources, compared to one fourth today. There were some positive signs in contributions, including in 2014, when Government partners had increased contributions to regular resources by 9 per cent compared to 2013. For 2015, however, it was possible that the high value of the United States dollar and its effect on exchange rates could affect regular resources revenue and the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

109. The Director, Division of Public Partnerships, presented examples of results achieved through the use of regular resources in the Central African Republic (accessing water, sanitation and hygiene in emergencies), Viet Nam (improving institutions and services for children) and Belarus (reducing inequities for children with disabilities).

110. The representatives of 11 Governments pledged their support for UNICEF in the amount of $26 million.[1]

111. The Executive Director thanked the Governments that had made pledges, emphasizing the importance of working with partners to achieve results for children.

J. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2015

112. The Secretary introduced the list to Executive Board members for their information.

K. Adoption of draft decisions

113. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2015/1 through 2015/6 (see annex).

L. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

114. The Executive Director said that the new Executive Board, with its new President and Bureau, had made a very encouraging start to the year. At the session and the joint meeting of the Executive Boards, delegations had discussed the new and innovative means that UNICEF was using to reach the hardest-to-reach children and do business within the organization. The Board had taken important decisions to raise the Emergency Programme Fund ceiling, expand the revolving fund of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and affirm the principle of UNICEF engaging with countries transitioning from middle- to high-income status. It had approved two country programmes and held discussions.

115. Running as a thread through everything that the new Board had done, he said, was something old — the common, absolute commitment to the rights of children everywhere, especially of the most disadvantaged.

116. Even as he looked forward to the coming year, it was with some regret because the President of the Executive Board was departing New York to take up a new assignment. As Vice-President and now as President, the Ambassador was leaving an inspiring legacy of competence, commitment, clear vision and impartial leadership to achieve results.

[1] For details of Government contributions to regular resources pledged or paid for the years 2014 and 2015 (as at 5 February 2014), see E/ICEF/2015/CRP.2 on the UNICEF Executive Board website. Contributions also include pledges received during the 2014 United Nations Pledging Conference in November 2014 and those received outside of pledging events. As at 5 February 2014, UNICEF had received total pledges of $107 million for regular resources in 2015 from 29 Governments.

117. The President said that with the Executive Director at the helm of UNICEF and the able team that was behind him, UNICEF would continue to move to higher planes of performance and productivity. As had been reiterated throughout the session, 2015 was a pivotal year for UNICEF and the entire United Nations system. It was the year in which the post-2015 development agenda was expected to be adopted by the General Assembly in September. Member States must continue to use every tool and technique available, so that the widening chasm between the richest 1 per cent and the remaining 99 per cent of the population was bridged; so that families, communities and infrastructures would be resilient enough to withstand the next typhoon, the next earthquake, the next drought; so that staff, supplies and systems would be readily available when there was an outbreak of infectious disease; and so that the unending toll of human suffering caused by years of sectarian conflict would be halted.

118. The Group of Friends for Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, the informal group of more than 30 Member States that the President of the Board had co-convened on behalf of Pakistan, together with Guatemala and Luxembourg, had strongly supported the inclusion of all child-focused targets in the final post-2015 development agenda. The Group believed that investment in children was not just smart economics, but was also a model imperative. As it worked within the intergovernmental processes for the post-2015 development agenda and financing for development, it would continue to lean on UNICEF, its natural partner.

119. Reviewing the work of the Executive Board for the session, he said that the decision on support for countries transitioning to high-income status reflected the universality of the UNICEF mandate and recognized that inequality and inequities existed in all countries. By approving the extension and expansion of the Vaccine Independence Initiative, the Executive Board had recognized that expanding this longstanding mechanism would offer many additional advantages to children, by helping UNICEF and its partners secure good prices, stable supplies and timely and efficient procurement. Approval of the 2015 workplan and budget for Private Fundraising and Partnerships would help the organization and its National Committees to expand revenue from the private sector, a close partner and a significant and growing source of funding for UNICEF, and to bolster private sector engagement and advocacy for child rights in industrialized countries. These decisions would contribute to a stronger, more flexible and more responsive organization, guided by its able leadership and its whole-hearted embrace of innovation.

120. He said this would be his last session as President of the Executive Board, as the Executive Director had mentioned. In keeping with past practice, Pakistan would continue to hold the presidency, and he assured the Board of his successor's full support and cooperation.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2015

2015/1
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Madagascar and Mali (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.1-E/ICEF/2015/P/L.2) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 10 to 28 November 2014, in accordance with its decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Madagascar and Mali (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.1-E/ICEF/2015/P/L.2).

First regular session
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2015/2
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the six-month extension of the country programme for Ethiopia, all of which were approved by the Executive Director, as presented in table 1 of document E/ICEF/2015/P/L.3;

2. *Approves* the two-year extensions of the country programmes for Myanmar and Papua New Guinea, as presented in table 2 of document E/ICEF/2015/P/L.3.

First regular session
5 February 2015

2015/3
UNICEF work with countries transitioning from middle- to high-income status

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the growing experience of UNICEF in working in countries that have recently transitioned from middle-income to high-income status, as approved by the Executive Board through the approval of country programme documents and multi-country programme documents;

2. *Notes* that countries transitioning to high-income status often have significant populations of children that are still affected by multiple deprivations, and that some of these countries welcome ongoing partnerships with UNICEF at country level to support the realization of child rights;

3. *Further notes* that countries transitioning to high-income status also contribute significantly to developing innovative approaches to the realization of child rights for their own populations, and may be sources of learning, expertise and horizontal cooperation for other countries, and further notes that some of them have been successful in mobilizing support to UNICEF regular and/or other resources from private and/or public sources;

4. *Acknowledges* the work of UNICEF to date in countries transitioning from middle-income to high-income status and invites UNICEF to work with relevant countries to prepare country programme documents or multi-country programme documents for consideration and decision by the Executive Board, taking into account national contexts of countries for which these documents are developed and other relevant issues, including financial sustainability;

5. *Reiterates* the UNICEF formula for allocation of resources,[2] which directs the majority of regular resources to sub-Saharan Africa and least developed countries;

6. *Decides* to revisit this decision in the context of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, and invites UNICEF to present an analysis for the consideration of the Executive Board on existing experience in high-income countries and middle-income countries transitioning to high-income status as part of the preparation of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan.

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2015/4
Strengthening predictability of the UNICEF response to humanitarian crises: Proposal to increase the Emergency Programme Fund ceiling

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the proposal to increase the ceiling of the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.4);

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue to strengthen its internal capacities and its coordination with national Governments, relevant parts of the United Nations system and civil society to ensure an effective, predictable and timely response to natural disasters as well as to ongoing complex emergencies;

3. *Takes note* of steps taken by UNICEF to build stronger links between humanitarian and development programming, including a greater focus on resilience-building leading to sustainable development, and encourages UNICEF to continue to do so in order to address the challenges of protracted crises and increasing humanitarian needs;

[2] As contained in Executive Board decisions 1996/34, 1997/18 and 2012/15.

4. *Encourages* UNICEF to mobilize sufficient resources through its work with partners to meet the needs of all children in both development and humanitarian contexts;

5. *Approves* an increase in the ceiling of the Emergency Programme Fund to $75 million per annum, effective in 2015, to be met through allocation of regular resources, to increase the ability of UNICEF to provide an immediate, effective and predictable response to the needs of children and women affected by humanitarian emergencies;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to report on the status of the Emergency Programme Fund in its report on the use of regular resources.

First regular session
5 February 2015

2015/5
Extension and expansion of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and its revolving fund

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* a five-year extension of the Vaccine Independence Initiative for the period 2016 to 2020, in accordance with the terms of the original document approved by the Executive Board in 1991 (E/ICEF/1991/P/L.41), and amends the authorized capitalization of the underlying revolving fund to $100 million, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions;

2. *Approves* the utilization of the expanded underlying revolving fund to support the timely procurement of non-vaccine commodities (including health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and education supplies) and to support contracting arrangements that result in a secure supply or reduced prices of vaccines and other commodities.

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5 February 2015

2015/6
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2015 workplan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for 2015 fiscal year

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2015 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted expenses of $111.3 million, as detailed in the table below.

(in millions of United States dollars)

Investment funds	60.0
Other private sector fundraising costs	51.3
Total special-purpose expenses	**111.3**

2. *Notes* that $20.8 million in Private Fundraising and Partnerships development effectiveness costs and management costs were previously approved in the UNICEF integrated budget, 2014-2017 (E/ICEF/2013/AB/L.4);

3. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenses, as summarized in column II of table 2 of document E/ICEF/2015/AB/L.1, and to decrease or increase expenses, up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of the same table, should the apparent revenue from fundraising or cards and products sales decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1 above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2015 approved workplan.

B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2015

The Executive Board

1. *Notes* that for the period 1 January to 31 December 2015, Private Fundraising and Partnerships revenue is budgeted at $1,252.5 million, as shown in column II of table 2 in document E/ICEF/2015/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* allocation of investment funds, amounting to $60 million for 2015, and requests the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division to provide annually, at the second regular session of the Executive Board, information on the allocation of these funds among National Committees for UNICEF and the country offices, as well as an analysis of the performance of income-generation activities three years after the investment funds are allocated;

2. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2016 of $13.21 million, to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2016.

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